DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 167 108 IR 006 846

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TITLE Creating Agricultural Communication Centers for Training, Research, and Information Services. Report Number 6.
INSTITUTION State Univ. of New York, Ithaca. Coll. of Agriculture and Life Sciences at Cornell Univ.
PUB DATE Sep 74
NOTE 25p.; Papers in Communication; For related documents, see IR 006 846-851 and ED 162 648 ; Parts marginally legible due to small or broken type
AVAILABLE FROM The Communication Arts Graduate Teaching and Research Center, Cornell University, 640 Stewart Avenue, Ithaca, New York 14853 (single copies are free)

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.83 HC-$1.67 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Administrative Organization; *Agricultural Education; Agricultural Research Projects; Charts; *Developing Nations; Developmental Programs; *Information Centers; Information Dissemination; *Information Services; Rural Development; Training; *Universities
IDENTIFIERS *India

ABSTRACT

Several of the new agricultural universities in India have identified a special need to improve their communication capabilities through the better use of the mass media and other channels to narrow the communication gap between agricultural scientists, educators, and farmers. This paper discusses the basic concept, goals, administration, organization, and future of the Communication Centers recently established by two of these universities in their efforts to speed up agricultural and rural development and build stronger institutions. The appendices include organizational and function charts of the two centers as part of their university systems. (Author/CMV)

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CREATING AGRICULTURAL COMMUNICATION CENTERS FOR TRAINING, RESEARCH, AND INFORMATION SERVICES.

#6 William B. Ward

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Forward

Frequently top level administrative organizations for rural development and national development programs include technical, legal and fiscal offices. Although communication may be recognized as one of the ingredients of such a program, a communication specialist is not often enough included among the highest ranks of program officials (unless it happens to be a "public information" type of communication person). In this paper, Professor Ward emphasizes the necessity of having communication experts sit among those planning policy and executing programs. Although he discusses this in the context of establishing communication centers in universities in developing nations, it seems quite clear that Professor Ward's design can be applied far more widely.

Another major point the reader should examine carefully is Professor Ward's treatment, in the university context, of "Extension" and "Communication" as separate operations. He considers them as two related but distinct enterprises. Sometimes we have encountered people who see one as synonymous with the other.

Professor Ward has drawn on a considerable amount of experience in India and Latin America in discussing the organization of communication centers. His is no "ivory tower" approach; since he has been directly involved with bringing several into existance, he knows intimately the problems and the opportunities in establishing such centers. His paper serves as an excellent guide to those who need help in deciding organizational and policy issues related to communication centers.

The paper was prepared for the Cornell-CIAT International Symposium on Communication Strategies for Rural Development, held at Cali, Columbia, March 1974. The author headed the Department of Communication Arts at Cornell University for approximately 25 years. He has been on numerous assignments for the World Bank, the Ford Foundation and various organizations in Asia and Latin America. He is currently Professor of Communication Arts in the N.Y. State College of Agriculture and Life Sciences at Cornell University.

September 1974 Royal D. Colle

CREATING AGRICULTURAL COMMUNICATION CENTERS FOR TRAINING, RESEARCH, AND INFORMATION SERVICES

William B. Ward, Professor of Communication Arts,
Cornell University, Ithaca, New York, U.S.A.

In Mysore State in southern India, the term "navira" (new air) is used to describe changes that have taken place in modern times. A new wind blows there and stirrings of change can be seen even in remote villages. Among the reasons for this change is one of India's new agricultural universities. In nine short years it has become a force in the improvement of agriculture and rural living and it stands witness to what can be achieved with a pragmatic and integrated program of research, instruction, and extension.

A similar new wind is blowing in each of the other states of India and the communication gap between agricultural scientists, educators, and farmers is being narrowed slowly but surely.

Several of these new agricultural universities (the oldest is only 14) have identified a special need to improve their communication capabilities through better use of the mass media and other channels and to train people who can communicate the new technology effectively to millions of cultivators who must make the decisions that will determine India's agricultural future.

This paper will deal primarily with the Communication Centers that two of the leading universities have recently established in their efforts to speed up agricultural and rural development and build stronger institutions. (University of Agricultural Sciences at Bangalore, created in 1965, and the G.B. Pant University of Agriculture and Technology, established in 1960, formerly the Uttar Pradesh Agricultural University at Pantnagar and the first agricultural university in India.)

I will describe the principles, policies, and organizational structures they have adopted in adding this new dimension to their activities. The information may be useful to other universities and organizations. Some of the ideas might be accepted as is, others modified depending upon local circumstances.

First, consider the background that led these universities to decide that they should take such action. (The places may be different but some of the conditions are strikingly similar in other parts of the world):

(1) In a country with 60,000,000 cultivators, 550,000 villages where 80 percent of the people live, and with only one change agent per 50,000 villagers, a great gap existed between the research results in the universities' experiment stations and the cultivators.

(2) Although a considerable body of agricultural technology existed, there was a major void -- the lack of both a tradition and competence to get the research findings interpreted and into communicative channels oriented toward both the professional agricultural workers and the cultivators. Too many useful research results were buried in experiment stations and laboratories and very little of this new technology was flowing from the "knowledge centers" to farmers and other people who could use it. (India has rather extensive mass communication channels, particularly films, press, and radio; it is ironic, however, that the daily press sometimes carries more foreign agricultural research information than Indian mainly because the latter was not readily available but the former was through the wire services.)

(3) The task of communicating what is involved in applying the new and highly sophisticated technology to millions of farmers, the majority of whom are illiterate, was (and is) staggering.

(4) National, state, and district governments wanted and needed more agricultural information officers and expanding agricultural industries were crying for trained information personnel who also knew something about agriculture. There was (and still is) a severe shortage of trained people in agricultural communications who have an empathy with farmers and rural people. The training needed was of two kinds: limited in-service training to "hold-the-line" and specialized training at the undergraduate and graduate levels in agricultural universities to turn out students who could make careers in agricultural communications. There was not a single institution in the country oriented toward either one of these needs.

(5) Practitioners had to "fly blind" in many respects on the question of communication strategy because of so little communication research conducted in rural India. (Most of what was communication doctrine in the U.S. and other developed countries had to be discarded or substantially modified simply because of a vastly different culture.)

The Basic Concept

With that background in mind, a review of their experience and that of others, and a look ahead, the decision was reached by these institutions that instead of small, separate information functions that had grown up more or less helter skelter under different administrators a total, unified commitment was needed. This would be in the form of a university-wide Communication Center where communication personnel would be brought together in one location and the functions would include communication research, in-service training, undergraduate and graduate level teaching programs, and an information service to provide continuing and effective dissemination of the university's research and related undertakings.

A commitment of this kind implied an integration of communication into every phase of the university's on-campus teaching, research, and extension activities and channels between cooperating communication units would be direct and not via several administrative hierarchies. It meant that communication was a subject to be taught as well as a subject for research, while at the same time disseminating the information from the "knowledge center" to many different audiences. It meant also that the Center would have a budget of its own and equal standing with any of the other major departments of the university.

The policymakers realized that the ability of their institutions to interpret their mission to various audiences would be a major factor in ultimate success or failure and the piecemeal communication efforts of the past were not sufficient. One Vice-Chancellor stressed the fact that there was "overlapping of areas, confusion of responsibilities, and many other defects" in the set up of small communication units spread out under different administrators. He also observed that everybody's business in communication at the university often turned out to be nobody's business. Because there was too much dual control and very little coordination, too many important things "dropped between the slats."

Goals

Each institution set specific goals for their Communication Centers and, in general, they included these five:

(1) Develop a coordinated and strong information service, staffed by qualified communicators to: (a) interpret the results of scientific research from the experiment stations in cooperation with extension subject matter specialists and assist in the process of disseminating this information through all available channels to people who could use it; (b) improve internal communication (within the university); (c) inform influential people of the institution's programs and accomplishments; and

(d) give the university increased visibility with cultivators and village and city people. (The component elements of the information service were combined and coordinated because each one depended upon the other for its effectiveness. For example, the editorial-publication section needed photographs and booklets designed by artists, and then printed and distributed; the radio section depended on the news section for certain information. These are only illustrative of the many reasons why all information services were combined into one Center.)

(2) Offer, initially, a basic academic program in agricultural communication at the undergraduate level to help find and train young people in this new profession in India and to give those students in the agricultural sciences basic courses to assist them in being more successful in whatever field they chose as a career. Later, after sufficient experience and demonstrated need, move into a graduate program, thereby providing a "seed source" of competent personnel for the mass media, universities, government agencies, and agricultural industries.

(3) Support and enhance the teaching programs of the various colleges of the university by assisting faculty in the effective use of modern teaching media.

(4) Exercise leadership and initiate action for in-service communication training of faculty, agricultural information workers, and extension personnel at state and district levels. (The Agricultural Extension Services in the states are under the administration of the State Departments of Agriculture; the communication trainers should be part of the regular information and teaching personnel of the Center.)

(5) Conduct communication research to help guide action information programs and gradually to become a major source of agricultural communication research knowledge.

Administration and Organization

No one administrative setup will fit the requirements of different institutions, but there is one principle basic to the success of a Communication Center and it is this: The Director of the Center should be directly responsible to the top administrator, with close relationships with Deans of Colleges and Directors of research and extension. (In the case of the two agricultural universities in India, the Director of the Center reports to the Vice-Chancellor since activities of the Centers are university-wide; the position of Vice-Chancellor is equivalent to University President in the U.S.)

To be effective in guiding the communication programs, the Director of the Center must be involved in policy and program development of the institution. Then he and his staff have the opportunity of building communication support into all appropriate projects at the time they are being conceived, not after the fact or as an appendage at the last minute. He should also develop close working relations with the Agricultural Information Officer of the State Department of Agriculture.

Those who teach and do research in the Center should have academic standing comparable to other disciplines. The staff should be made up of high-quality, well-trained people who are professionals in the various fields of communication. A person cannot be expected to be a professional in all of them any more than one can be an expert in all areas of the plant sciences. The Center requires professionally trained people in publication writing and editing, printing, radio writing and broadcasting, news writing, motion picture production, photography, exhibit planning and preparation, public speaking, and translating information into local languages--or such combinations of these as is most practical under local conditions.

In the final analysis, of course, success depends on the professional competence and cooperativeness of the personnel involved. The ideas presented here relate mainly to those principles of administrative policy and organizational structure that are capable of strengthening agricultural communication programs in extension, teaching, and research. They are not intended as standard patterns. Likewise, the charts in Appendices I through VII are only a means of bringing into focus the different organizational structures.

For various reasons, an institution may not be able to create a full-fledged Communication Center all at once, but could establish a "phased-in" program over a period of four or five years. A sequence such as the following may be possible:

Phase I Organize an agricultural information service; draw together the available personnel, equipment, and supplies into one location. For example, writers, photographers, editors, and audio-visual specialists who may be assigned to various units should be reassigned to the new Center. (This was the beginning of the Communication Center at the University of Agricultural Sciences; see the Vice-Chancellor's Executive Order, Appendix VIII.)

Phase II Provide in-service communication training programs.

Phase III Offer a few basic undergraduate courses in agricultural communication as electives; later consider a more extensive program both at undergraduate and graduate levels but stress the necessity of a strong backgrcund in the agricultural sciences along with agricultural communication.

Phase IV Begin a program of communication research.

One of the sticky problems encountered in organizing these Communication Centers has been the reluctance of some administrators to let go of one or two of their functions for inclusion in a Center to serve the entire agricultural university. In the Indian agricultural university, for example, certain communication functions are or have been in Extension Education Departments or Directorates of Extension. The basic concept of a university-wide Communication Center, as presented here, is broader than this one dimension of the university. Furthermore, from my observations, Extension Education Departments in these universities appear to be concerned primarily with program planning, extension administration and supervision, evaluation, meetings, group discussions, and the like. Two or three communication courses are sometimes offered. However, their staffs have been trained mainly in other areas and agricultural communication as a profession becomes of secondary importance.

Extension Education is a professional area of its own and needs full attention. Likewise, the professional area of Agricultural Communication should be of primary importance in its own right.

In regard to the extension information service function from the university, the concept and operating policy should be that the research scientist, the subject matter extension specialist, and the communication specialist of the Center should work together in a team approach. The communication specialist can often be the link between the scientist and the extension subject matter specialist and bring the two together so the research can be interpreted into practical, localized information and provided to State Departments of Agriculture for field extension personnel and to other existing channels of communication.

All segments of an agricultural university--extension, research, teaching, and administration--want, need, and should get information services from a coordinated Center. Extension should be a major benefactor of an effectively integrated agricultural communication program, but other programs of the university should be equally well served.

In agricultural universities in other countries where the information service function was started under the administrative control of extension, it was not long until the research administrators were asking for their own information staffs, and the top administration of the universities wanted a separate information or public relations staff. Often three or four different units engaged in similar work at a land-grant type university were competing with each other for funds, personnel, newspaper space, time on radio stations, and the like. This uncoordinated operation brought headaches to administrators and criticism from those in charge of mass media, not to mention less effective results. There is no need for new institutions or organizations in developing countries to make the same mistakes.

The Future

Since the first Communication Center in India of the type discussed here was created at Uttar Pradesh Agricultural University at Pantnagar in 1970 (with some financial and consulting assistance from the Ford Foundation), I have been asked several times by interested parties whether the concept is still viable. I believe it is and more important than ever, particularly with the rapid spread of new communication technology in developing countries. But it will take more time at Pantnagar, Bangalore, and elsewhere for the concept to be completely understood by some of the officials of the universities and the faculties. The concept is new to them and therefore understandable that it will involve more experience on their part with the operations of the Centers, plus the fact that the Centers will have to prove the concept is workable and useful. Among other things, this requires strong, capable leadership by the Director of the Center.

A major problem of the Centers is to train personnel and develop an appropriate program focus. This takes time, but considerable progress is being made and the concept of an all-agricultural university Communication Center continues to grow

in India. It is my understanding that the Association of Indian Agricultural Universities has requested the establishment of communication centers in all of the twenty agricultural universities as part of the nation's Fifth Five-Year Plan. (Appendix IX.)

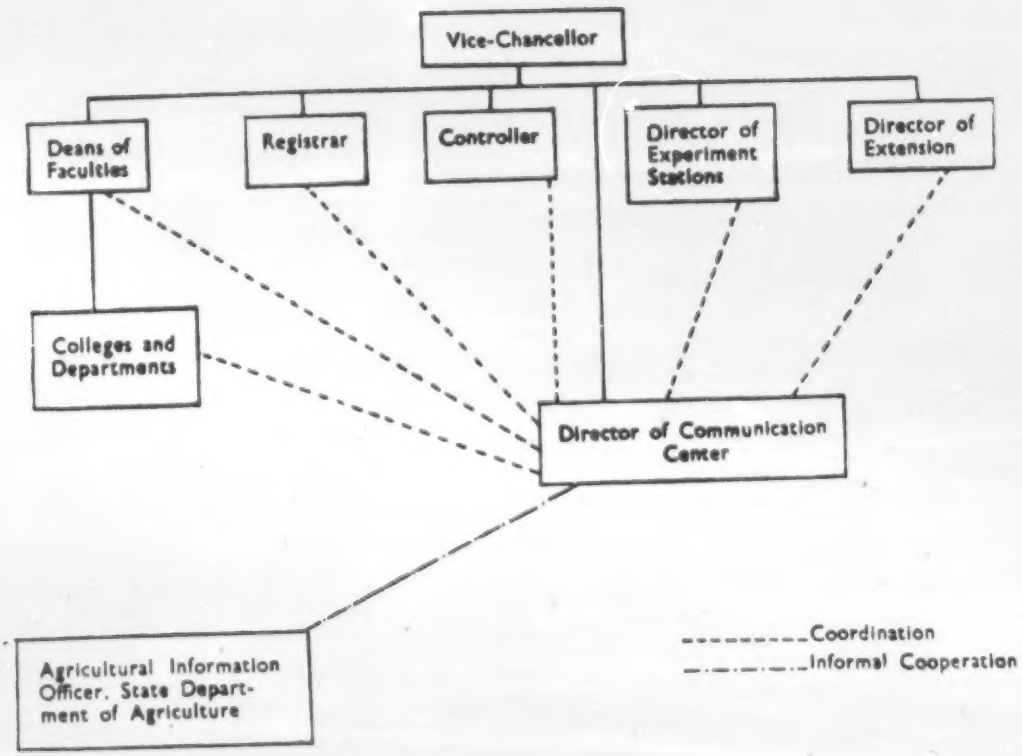
Vice-Chancellor D.P. Singh, who worked closely with me during the planning stages of the Center at Pantnagar, says that "one of the most striking changes of all has been the new rapport that has sprung up between farmers and 'our universities', as some now call them. A few years ago there was almost no communication between the two; the universities were almost as insular as though enclosed by walls, well schooled in the classics but innocent of what was going on a few miles from their own gates. Today there's a lively dialogue between scientists and farmers."

The new Communication Center there is an integral part of that vital diablogue. Despite many difficulties in the pre-natal and post-natal stages, I have every confidence this Center and others like it, that are well planned and supported, will turn out to be something the institutions and the rural people in this developing nation can look upon with pride.

#

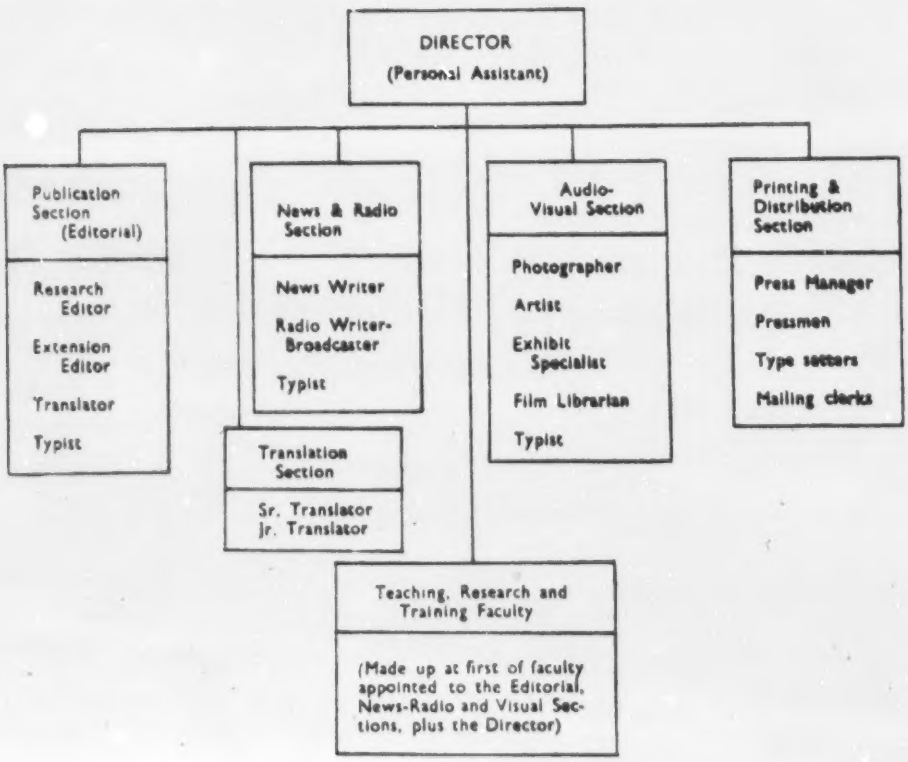
APPENDIX I

An example of a desirable organizational structure within the university:



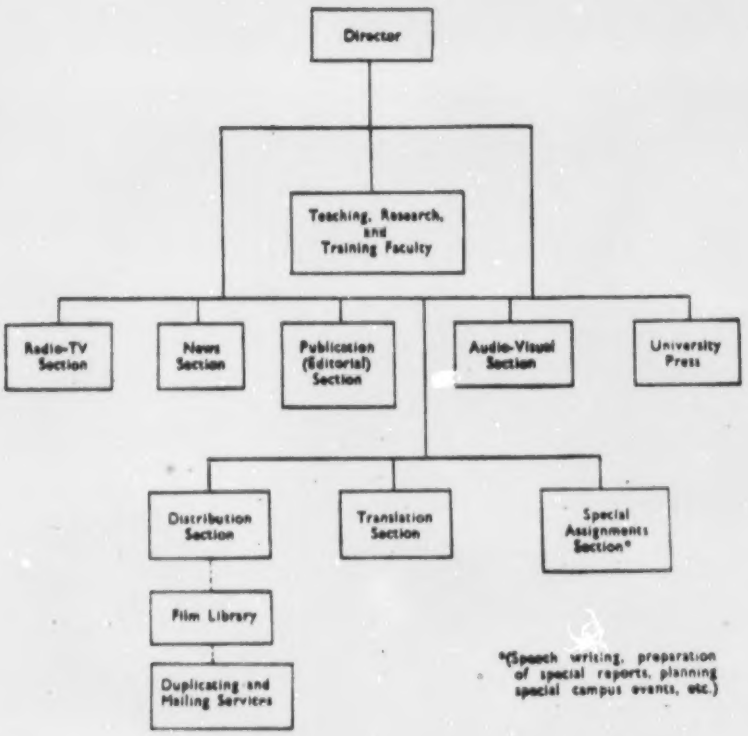
APPENDIX II

The staffing of a Communication Center may have to be started on a minimum basis and this would be one form of organization:



APPENDIX III

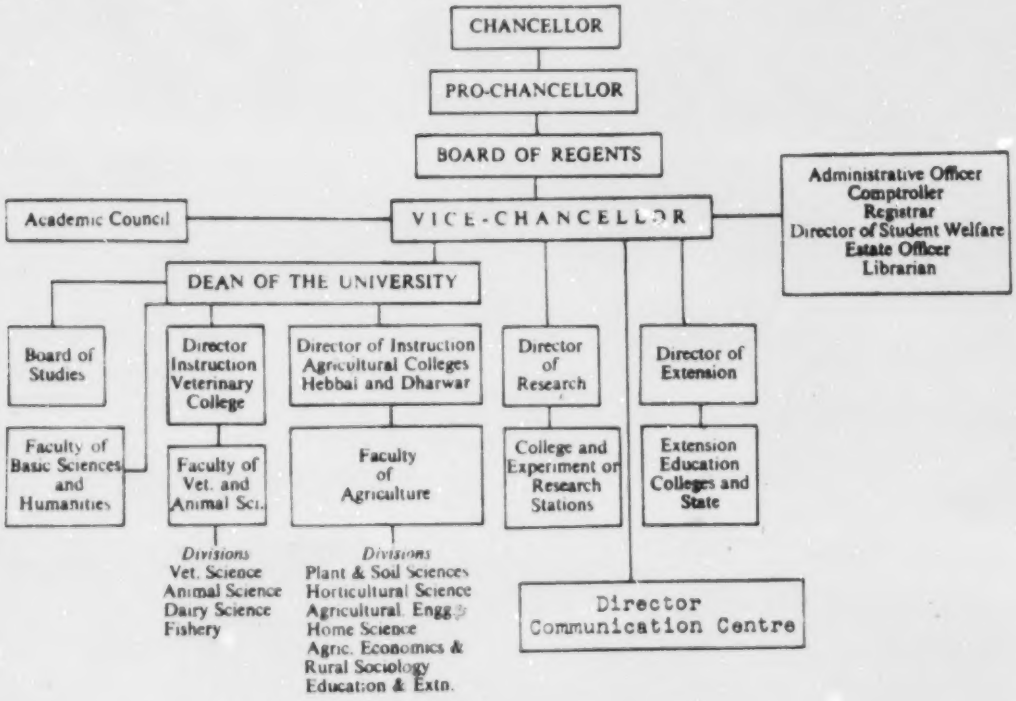
Over the years, a Communication Center should gain strength and this organizational plan might evolve:



APPENDIX IV

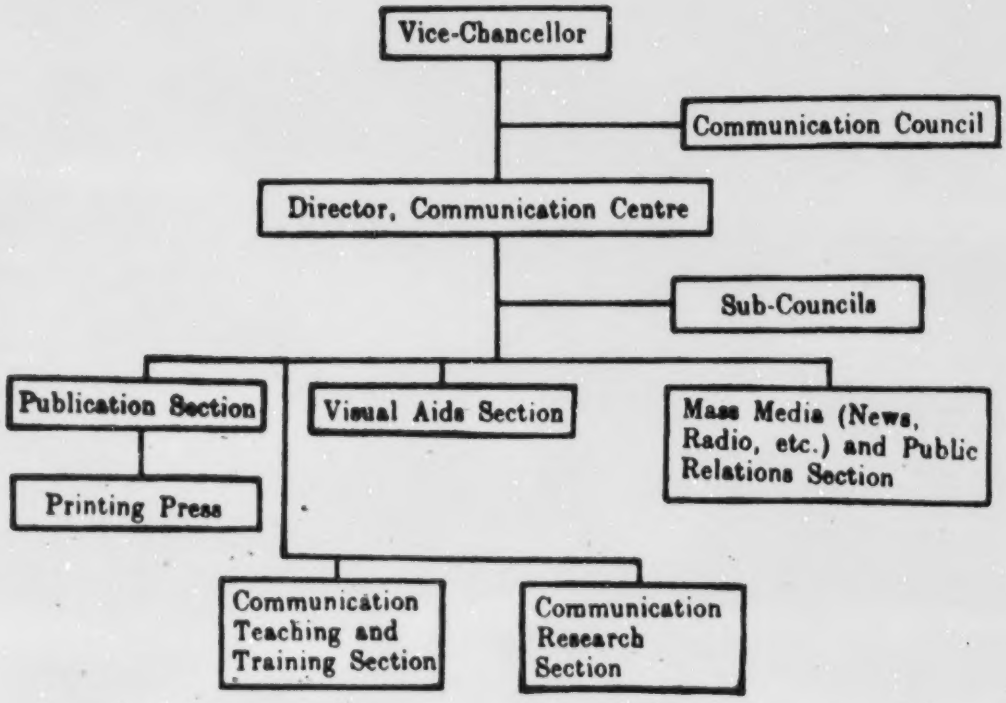
The relationship of the Communication Center to the other parts of the University of Agricultural Sciences at Bangalore, India:

ORGANISATION OF THE UNIVERSITY OF AGRICULTURAL SCIENCES, MYSORE STATE
(PROVIDED FOR IN THE ACT AND STATUTES)



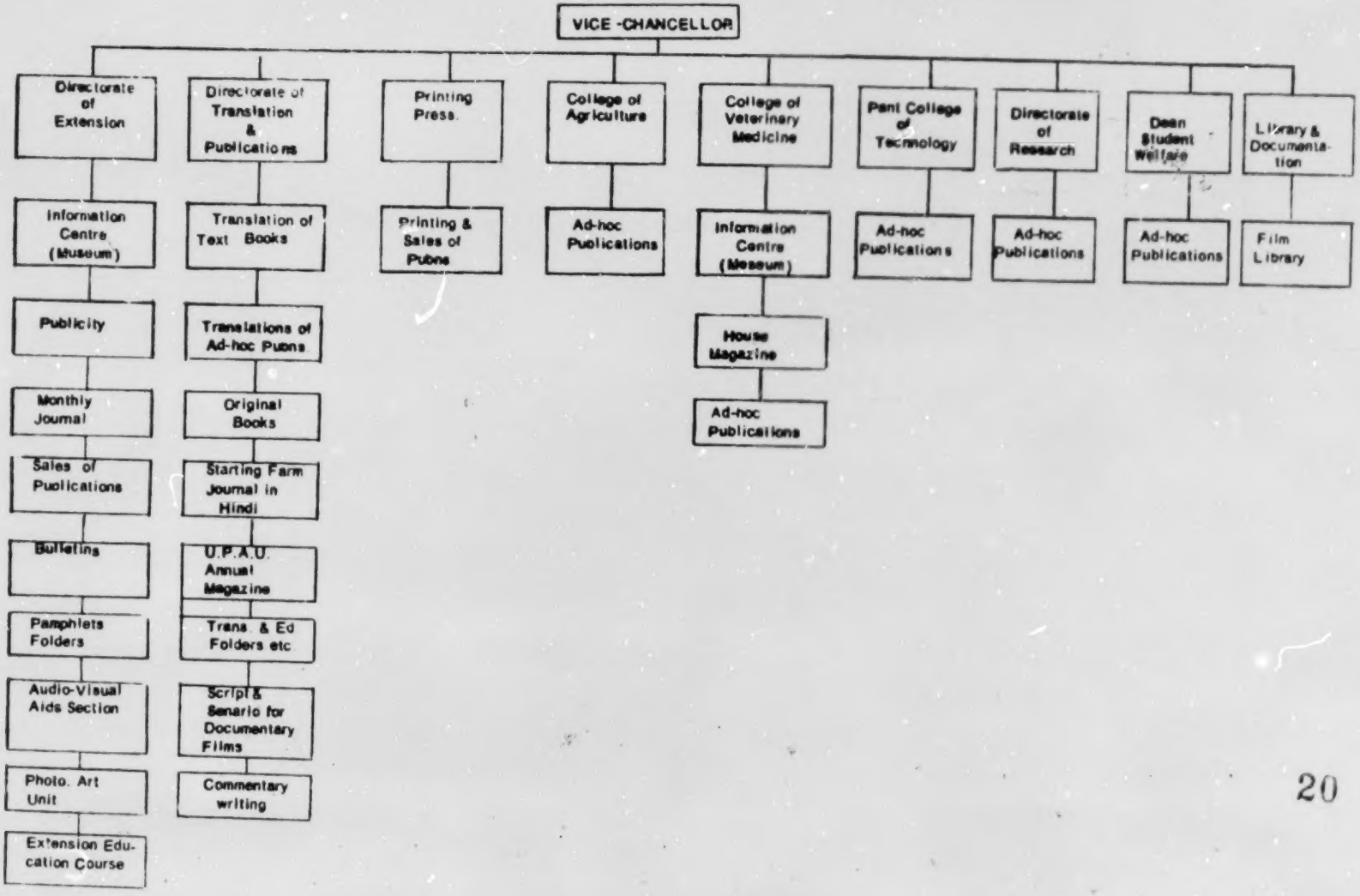
APPENDIX V

The organizational structure of the Communication Center at the University of Agricultural Sciences at Bangalore, India:



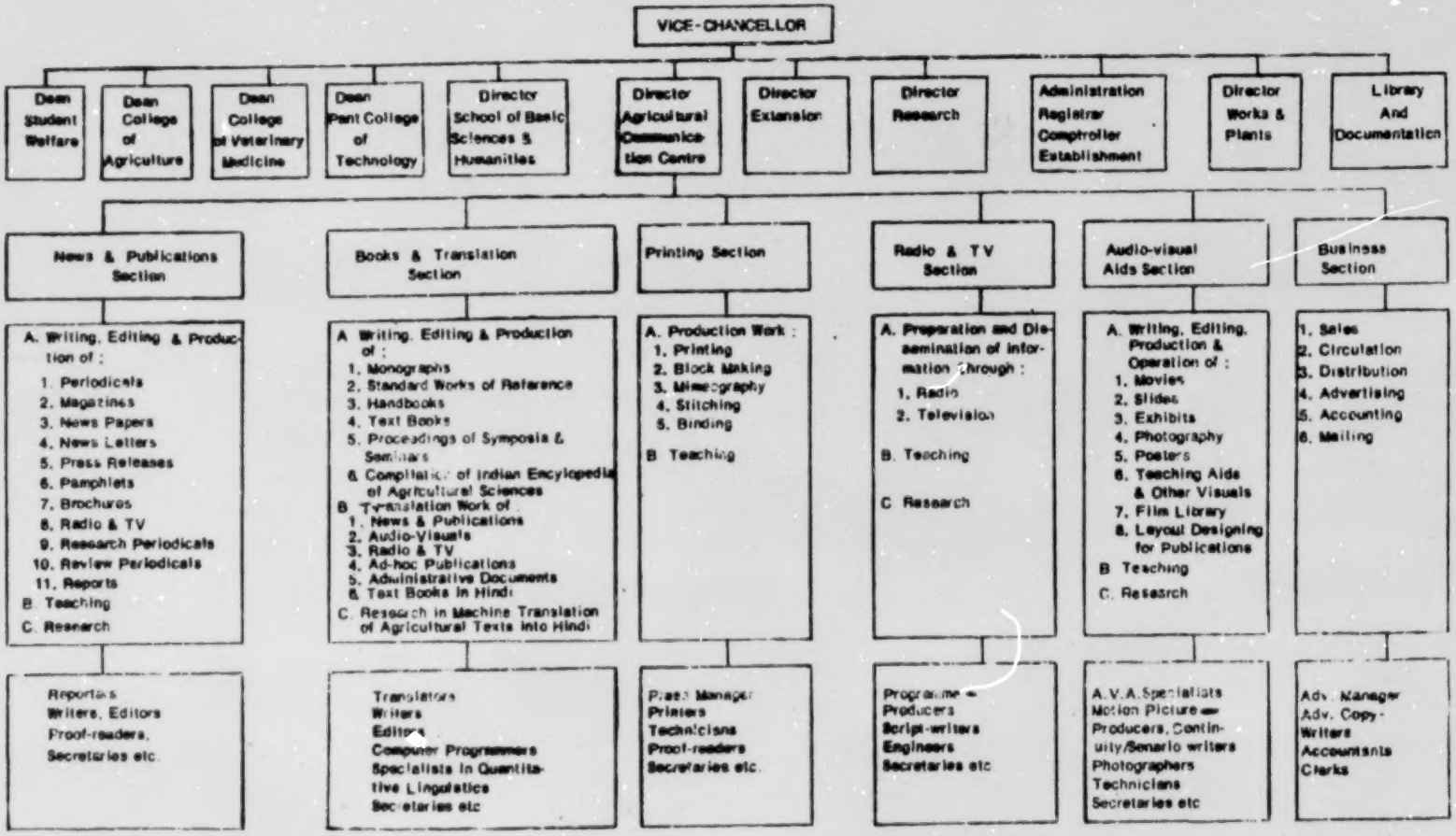
APPENDIX VI

EXISTING FUNCTIONS - AGRICULTURAL COMMUNICATION AT U.P.A.U., PANTNAGAR



APPENDIX VII

ORGANISATIONAL PLAN OF THE PROPOSED AGRICULTURAL COMMUNICATION CENTRE AT U.P.A.U. PANTNAGAR.



APPENDIX VIII

The University of Agricultural Sciences, Bangalore

No. AA-92

Hebbal Campus
Bangalore - 24
April 12, 1972

EXECUTIVE ORDER

Sub: Setting up of a Communication Centre at the main campus of the University of Agricultural Sciences at Hebbal.

At present the communication functions of the University of Agricultural Sciences are being performed by various agencies at Hebbal such as the Publications Council, the Directorate of Extension, Directorate of Research, the Mysore Journal of Agricultural Sciences, etc. On the suggestion of Professor Ward, Communication Consultant and Chief of Party, USAID/ Tennessee Team, Bangalore, it is considered necessary to set up an integrated Communication Centre which has the responsibility of not only doing extension information work, but be the chief organization for the total communication about all activities of the University of Agricultural Sciences, such as, teaching, research and extension.

With this purpose in mind, it has been decided that a beginning should be made in setting up of the Communication Centre with an Honorary Director, who will be the Dean for the present. In due course a full-time Director of Communication Centre may be thought of. The Communication Centre would consist of the following personnel working under the Honorary Director and in consultation with Professor Ward.

They are:

1. Editor of the Publications Council
2. Assistant Editor and his other staff
3. The Information Specialist
4. As many Artists as can be pooled from those available at Hebbal
5. The UAS Press and its staff

Appendix VIII - (continued)

For the effective functioning of the Communication Centre, a Communication Council is formed with the following members:

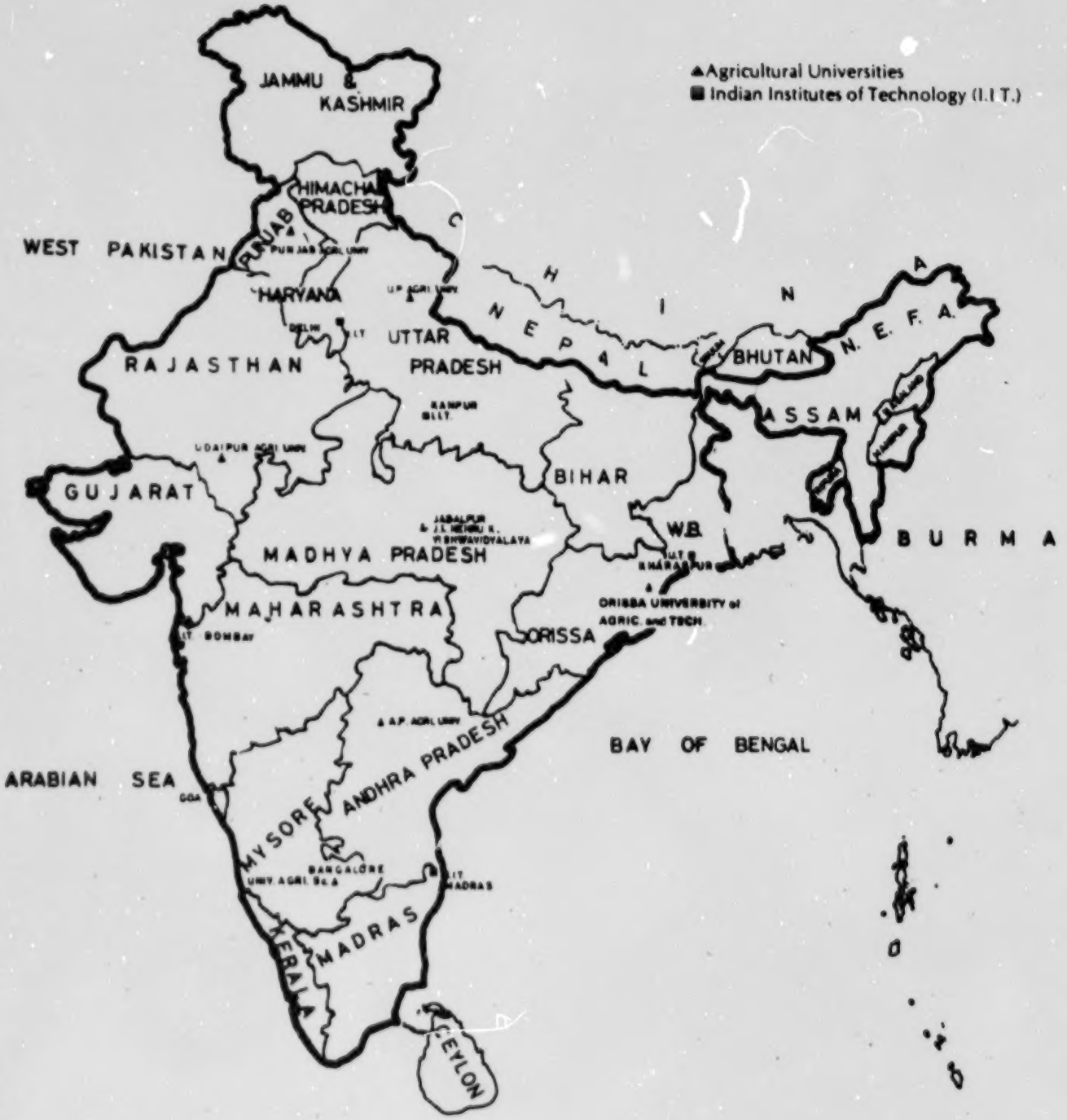
1.	Vice-Chancellor	... Chairman
2.	Dean & Honorary Director of the Communication Centre	... Convener
3.	Professor Ward, Chief of Party	... Member
4.	Director of Extension	"
5.	Director of Research	"
6.	All the Directors of Instruction	"
7.	Principal, Ag. Engineering Institute, Raichur	"
8.	Editor of Publications Council	"
9.	Registrar	"
10.	Director of Student Welfare	"

This Communication Council will function as a policy making body, but the day-to-day operations of the Council will be decided by the Director of the Centre in consulatation with such members of the Council as may be necessary. The Communication Centre will come into operation from the 1st of May, 1972. The consequential arrangements as indicated above may be effected by this date. The first meeting of the Communication Council will be held on the 15th May 1972.

Sd/-
(K. C. Naik)
Vice-Chancellor

To
All Concerned

APPENDIX IX


▲Agricultural Universities
■ Indian Institutes of Technology (I.I.T.)
JAMMU & KASHMIR
HIMACHAL PRADESH
PUNJAB
WEST PAKISTAN
HARYANA
DELHI
UTTAR PRADESH
RAJASTHAN
CHINA
NEPAL
BHUTAN
N.E.F.A.
ASSAM
BIHAR
W.B.
GUJARAT
MADHYA PRADESH
MAHARASHTRA
BOMBAY
ORISSA
BURMA
ANDHRA PRADESH
BAY OF BENGAL
ARABIAN SEA
MYSORE
BANGALORE
MADRAS
KERALA
CEYLON